



Ford's Latest Recall Affects 105K Vehicles—See If Your Car Is on the List



Never Ignore a Flashing Check Engine Light—Here's Why



Why You Should Read Your Car's Owner Manual



Ford Issues Recall for Cars That May Move Forward While in Reverse



Tesla Issues Recall for 376,000 Vehicles Over Steering Issue



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# Why You Should Never Ignore a Recall On Your Car



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[Family Handyman's Editorial Process](#)

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The average car has three recalls, so chance are you'll have to navigate at least one. Here's what to know, especially if you're a procrastinator.

Around 28 million people were affected by auto recalls in 2024. It started in January, with 2.2 million Teslas, then closed out with Ford and Chrysler leading the way. There are many reasons for this, from faulty airbags and electrical systems to steering, brakes, ignition switches, tires, tailgate latches, and overheating batteries.

And the number of recalls is likely to increase as cars become more sophisticated and expensive, says Chris "Moose" Pyle, an automotive expert with [JustAnswer](#). "Manufacturers have to cut corners and use some cheaper parts to get the MSRP down, often resulting in a cheaper-made part failing prematurely," he says.

If you've just found out about a recall or think you've missed the recall repair window, here's what to know to keep yourself and your passengers safe, plus your bank account from being dinged.

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## What Is an Auto Recall?

An auto recall occurs when widespread safety issues or defective parts are found or when vehicles fail to meet regulatory standards, such as emissions. Consumers are then asked to bring their vehicles into the shop to address it.

"Most times, a recall is likely to be issued due to an offense-level risk that is able to endanger the life of the driver as well as the passengers and even other people around," says Andrew Franks, co-founder of [Claimsline](#).

Recalls can be issued by a manufacturer or, in the United States, by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

## What Is the Typical Auto Recall Remedy?

It depends on the severity and type of the defect, but under federal law, the vehicle manufacturer will cover the cost. If your vehicle has a recall issued for it, next steps may include:



- **Inspection**, where the shop checks for something that is damaged or incorrectly assembled.
- **Software updates**, which aren't physical repairs, but could include correcting issues with autonomous driving systems or updating the engine control unit.
- **Failing parts**, in which case it's relatively urgent to arrange a visit to the shop so it can be replaced.
- **Safety systems**, such as airbags. "Those need to be handled now since you could be injured if you continue driving the vehicle," says Pyle.
- **Warranty extensions**, which don't involve repairs, but add to the amount of time or mileage under which repair parts and labor will be covered.

In some cases, the manufacturer might offer a partial refund to cover the cost of defective parts or to reimburse for towing or out-of-pocket repairs made before the recall was issued. In extreme cases, manufacturers may offer to buy back the vehicle, says Joshua Detzel, marketing director at **C. Harper Auto Group**. "This is often seen in situations involving severe structural defects or when the vehicle qualifies under lemon laws."

Regardless of the type of recall, you will likely get a recall notice in the mail or electronically with instructions for what to do next. "Manufacturers will work hand-in-hand with their dealers to contact customers to ensure the recall is completed," says Gretchen Seidel, an automotive expert at **Seidel & Co.** who worked on the Takata airbag recall, which was one of the largest automotive recalls in history. "In the case of Takata, extra measures were taken to put customers in loaner vehicles, sometimes for several months, if they were under a do-not-drive notification."

Franks says that in a rare scenario, a manufacturer might have gone out of business. "If this is the case, then the liability can sometimes be passed on to the supplier, or in some countries, the government can take charge of categorizing the repairs."



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# Is There a Time Limit on When a Manufacturer Will Repair My Recalled Vehicle?

Yes, federal law only requires manufacturers to cover safety defects for 15 years, and each state has different laws and regulations, says Seidel. For example, in California, the window is only 10 years. “There shouldn’t be any reason an owner can’t get a vehicle into a dealership to complete a recall within 10 years,” she says. But “you should get any recalls completed at your local dealership as soon as possible since they usually have to do with safety concerns, emissions or compliance concerns.”

## How Do I Know If My Vehicle Has a Recall?

You can check to see if your vehicle has any open recalls through the [NHTSA VIN lookup tool](#). If it does, contact a dealership or other manufacturer-authorized repair center to schedule the repair. It’s also a good idea to check for recalls when buying a used car.

“Be proactive,” says Detzel. “It’s always better to address recalls as soon as possible to ensure your safety and peace of mind.”

## What Happens If I Miss a Recall?

If you miss a recall repair window, then the associated financial and liability responsibilities fall on you instead of the manufacturer. That means you will likely have to pay for the repair, plus other potential problems could arise such as:

- Safety risks from the defective parts, which could result in accidents and injuries. “Some issues, like brake failures or airbag defects, can worsen the longer they are left unrepaired,” says Detzel.
- Decreased resale value, since buyers may hesitate to purchase a vehicle that’s missed its recall repair window.
- Liability in accidents: “If an accident occurs due to a defect addressed in the recall, you could be held liable for negligence,” says Detzel.
- Insurance coverage issues, as some providers may deny claims for accidents caused by unresolved recalls.

## About the Experts

- **Gretchen Seidel** is an automotive expert at [Siedel & Co.](#), with more than 30 years of experience in OEM, retail and FinTech, including working with the Acura division of American Honda turning the Takata airbag recall.
- **Joshua Detzel** is marketing director and automotive enthusiast at [C. Harper Auto Group](#) in Belle Vernon, Pennsylvania
- **Chris “Moose” Pyle** is a master-certified technician with 20-plus years of automotive experience. He has also worked as an expert for [JustAnswer](#) since 2006.
- **Andrew Franks** is co-founder of [Claimsline](#) car finance and accident management services, and an expert in automotive finance and regulated products.

### AUTHOR

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